

Outline, Week 6

First half of *Villette*

(!!!!!!)

Readings

- Charlotte Bronte, *Villette* (to Chapter 22)
- Mikhail Bakhtin, from “Discourse in the Novel,” 259-331
- Mikhail Bakhtin, from “Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics,” p 5-8 and skim for examples of polyphony
- Joseph Boone, “Depolicing Villette”
- Ted Underwood, David Bamman, and Sabrina Lee, The Transformation of Gender in English-Language Fiction

Talking about the Readings

- “The Transformation of Gender in English-Language Fiction”
 - [Keton]
- The Bakhtin
 - Do we understand:
 - * what terms like *language*, *object*, and *word* mean here, precisely?
 - * dialogic vs. monologic; prose vs. poetry
 - * polyphony (Dostoyevsky)
 - * Distinction between *stylistics* and *linguistics*
 - * tension of centripetal, centrifugal forces in *language*
 - * *style* of prose as *structure* of meaning written *against* the *alien* structures of meaning belonging to the reader
 - [haven’t read the last section; will update later]

Bridging into Villette

Starting with Boone

- “But I would suggest that if heteroglossic voices, as Bakhtin has shown, comprise fictional narrative, then the novel, relative to other modes of discourse, may create a space – however minimal, compromised, or “imaginary” – for dissent, self-interrogation, and subversive dialogue with those totalizing systems of power which inculcate the values of a disciplinary social order. In our excitement over discovering the Foucauldian prisons lurking in so much novelistic discourse, I would like to make sure we don’t forget this dialogical dimension of fiction.” (42)
- Boone as a model for talking about *Villette* with Bakhtin’s dialogical framework?
- Some interesting points:

- The panopticon in *Villette* (the novel is clearly and quite explicitly concerned with surveillance)
- The reader as a ‘priveleged spy’; the complications of that in *Villette*
- **My question:** What do we make of the fact that most of Lucy’s moments of being *a spy* come from her leaning into other people flat out ignoring or underestimating her?
 - * Mme. Beck assumes she is sleeping; Dr. John thinks no more of her than the furniture; M. Paul seems to think (maybe, hopefully?) most of the time that she doesn’t understand French
 - * *Dishonesty* vs. *Reticence*
- On heretic narratives
 - * When Boone hones in on the concept of Lucy as writing a heretic narrative, he doesn’t fully acknowledge her heresy is located (*sort of*) in her *Protestantism*, something I think we’re to imagine she shares with ‘*The Reader*’
 - * surveillance is also coded repeatedly (though not without **a lot of** complication) as *foreign*, not *English*
 - * What does this do?
- Renegotiation of the Police
 - * what do we make of Miller now?

Moving into Hali’s reading

- Narration, desire, reticence... what do we make of the Play scene?
 - [Hali’s Close Reading]
 - spend time with this scene
 - then, also look at Hali’s description of Lucy’s typical narration as either “a dry but cogent judgement mediating between us and other characters” or the “disoriented and grasping” force which “personifies her surroundings and puts us in direct contact with her experience, **seemingly without any aid or intervention of her reason**”
 - * (I really like that description.)

‘The relationship between anxiety and interiority’; now featuring complications courtesy of Lucy Snowe!

- Going back to Keton’s question from Week 5
 - We didn’t really get a chance to discuss this last week, it’d be nice to talk about in relation to Trollope and Oliphant
- What about the relationship between neuroatypicality (defined broadly, encompassing both psychiatric and neurological difference) and literary interiority?
 - [anxiety as something that most people feel, but that has an enormity to it that makes it stand out in our mind as *different*]
 - [neuroatypicality as a set of things, by definition, not shared by the majority of a text’s imagined readers... in most cases; a *difference*]

not so readily normalized, perhaps not so easily translated into [most] reader's *structures of meanings*?

- To answer that (well, discuss. I don't think there's one answer) maybe we need to parse out what literary interiority *actually is*.
 - Keton's Hamlet paper opens up some interesting venues here
 - Is interiority the 'opacity,' 'obstruction from view,' and way of seeming 'puzzling to us'¹ that Freud reads into Hamlet? Or is more akin to the result of free indirect discourse, a glimpse into the structures of someone's thoughts?
 - Different interiorities for different mediums? Both valid kinds of interiorities? Working in tandem? Against one another??
 - Is there a relationship between Hamlet's interiority (Hamlet being generally understood to be pivotal work in the movement toward characters having interiority) and what Keton defines as bipolarity?
- When we decide on that, what the hell do we make of Lucy Snowe²?
 - Critics often read her as *denying us* interiority, or being *protective of* her interiority.
 - What work does that do, and how connected is (or isn't) that to her mental difference?
 - * do we end up with more or less of an impression of interiority?

¹Somewhat related sidenote but I love the assumptions that melancholia makes *Hamlet* "puzzling to us" makes about Freud's intended audience/the imagined readers/audience of *Hamlet*, generally. This is super present in a lot of critical discourse around *Villette*, imo, though less obvious because people (usually) aren't making strong diagnostic claims about Lucy.

²To clarify, while I've given you guys the paper I wrote on reading Lucy as Autistic, I don't at all think that's the *only* or *most correct* way to read her mental difference. But I think her mental difference should be accounted for in some way, and often is not fully.